Countless independent experts, health care professionals, and insurance authorities across the country all warned—all of them warned—about what we are seeing right now. So did many of us. If only the Democrats who run Washington had listened. But the President needed their votes for a bill he hoped would define his legacy, so they gambled that their constituents would just learn to live with ObamaCare and forget the false promises. That was the gamble. In other words, Washington Democrats were specifically warned about the consequences we are seeing, and they voted for ObamaCare anyway.

Republicans repeatedly warned about Americans losing their health plans—repeatedly. We repeatedly warned about Americans losing access to doctors and to hospitals. We repeatedly warned about rising costs and skyrocketing premiums. Check the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. We warned and we warned and we warned about each of these.

Frankly, we shouldn't have had to do that. It doesn't take an actuary to figure this stuff out, and the issues my constituents now have to put up with as a result of this law are just simply unacceptable.

Kimberly Maggard from Nicholasville wrote that the health plan available to her through the ObamaCare exchange—now listen to this—would cost more than her family's house payment and car payment combined. Kimberly Maggard from Nicholasville in my State wrote that the health plan available to her through the ObamaCare exchange would cost more than her family's house payment and car payment combined.

Here is what she said:

> We are just average Kentuckians working and living paycheck to paycheck without any assistance from government programs. I really don't know what we will do if they have to pay that amount out for insurance. We might lose our home . . . our transportation . . . my daughter might have to drop out of college . . . the list goes on and on. What are we supposed to do?

Harriet White from Rockville said that ObamaCare is negatively impacting her family's finances and quality of care. Here is what she said:

> The sad truth is that like my coworkers, my deductible has doubled along with my premiums. The only way to be able to adjust is for us to either reduce or stop our 401(k) contributions. This is hardly affordable health care.

Here is what Larry Thompson from Lexington said:

> [The] health plan that I've had for 10 years just got cancelled, and the least expensive plan on the exchange is the 246 percent increase—that means hundreds of extra dollars per month we don't have.

Look, all of this is completely and totally unacceptable, and so many of ObamaCare's consequences were basically predicted by Republicans years ago—years ago.

So it is no wonder vulnerable Democrats are dashing for the exits, performing political contortions that would make Houdini blush. But here is the issue: Until these folks are willing to face reality, I doubt it will matter.

One of our colleagues on the other side was asked back in 2009 if she would accept ''100 percent responsibility'' and ''100 percent accountability'' for the failure or success of any legislation she voted for. She said she would. So she and her colleagues now have a choice. They can keep trying to distance themselves from ObamaCare in public while simultaneously protecting it from meaningful change in private—to keep standing by as this train wreck unloads on the middle class—or they can simply accept that they were wrong to ignore all the warnings, and then work with Republicans to repeal and replace ObamaCare with real bipartisan health care reform. That is the choice.

If Washington Democrats are looking for a political exit, that is the only meaningful one available—the only exit. If they are looking for the best policy outcome to do right by the people who elected them, they will reach the same conclusion. That is the good news.

I hope they will get there soon because we have already seen Washington Democrats travel through just about every one of the stages of grief: Denial at first, claiming the law's only problem is that it was just too popular; then anger, pointing fingers of blame at contractors, Republicans, of course, the media—really anyone but themselves, then bargaining, proposing nips and tucks to a law that needs an overhaul instead.

For the sake of our country, let's hope they just speed right along to acceptance—the acceptance that ObamaCare can't work and won't work, and that their constituents deserve better. When they do, Republicans will be right here, just as we have always been, ready to work with them to start over with real reforms that decrease costs and improve access to care. That is what our constituents wanted all along, and that is just what we should give them.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for debate only for 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the majority controlling the first half.

Who yields time?

The Senator from Oregon.

NOMINATIONS

Mr. MERKLEY. Mr. President, I rise today along with my colleague from New Mexico to protest the paralysis that has kept the Senate from confirming well-qualified nominees to do their jobs.

The U.S. Senate provides the opportunity for all of us to weigh in on our constitutional role of advice and consent, advice and consent regarding nominations to the executive branch and to the judicial branch by the President.

Everyone in this body agrees that the Senate should, under this responsibility, serve as a significant check on the quality of Presidential nominations, the quality of nominations or nominees for the court and for executive positions. I certainly share that sentiment, that the Senate should provide this significant check on quality. The Senate should vet nominees. We should question them. We should debate them. And then we should vote on whether to confirm or reject them.

What is absolutely clear, however, is that when advice and consent becomes block and destroy, then the Senate process is broken. A minority of one branch of government should never be able to systematically undermine the other two branches of government. Yet that is exactly what we have today.

Look at the well-qualified nominees who have been blocked from having an up-or-down vote here in the Senate Chamber just in recent weeks: MEL WATT, nominated to head the Federal Housing Finance Agency; and then nominees to the court: Patricia Millett, Cornelia Pillard, and now Robert Wilkins.

These folks are highly qualified, but they were not allowed to have an up-or-down vote. The Senate was not allowed to weigh in on whether they were to be confirmed or not confirmed. This situation in which the Senate minority undermines the executive and judicial branches is unacceptable. It is inconsistent with the concept of coequal branches of government. Our Constitution laid out this vision that the House and the Senate, as the legislative branch, would serve as a coequal branch with the executive branch and the judicial branch.

Certainly the ability to check nominations, to vet nominations, is part of that check on the other two branches. But when it is used in this manner, this manner in which you can systematically undermine the function of another branch, then you have taken a position and created a process that is inconsistent with coequal branches. Taken to its extreme—and we are seeing that extreme today—the executive branch is compromised in its ability to function, the judicial branch is compromised in its ability to function.

Now we have a special situation that has arisen in which the minority says: We are going to block all nominees to the DC Circuit Court regardless of their qualifications because we want to